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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a summary discussion of the current status of special education in Japan, its recent history, and issues and trends. Noted is establishment of the current educational system (and special education system) as part of post-war American occupation. The following issues are discussed: centralization and teacher autonomy; compulsory education; numbers of children served in regular and special education; classroom management approaches; the "fallen behind" (those with learning problems); school bullying; curriculum and instruction; parental motivation in education and parent financed institutions; children with reading difficulties; upper secondary schooling; transition and employment; the social status of teachers; teacher education; the Japan Teachers' Union; teacher salaries; financing special education (shared by national, prefectural, and municipal governments); and educational computing in the schools. Additional issues identified include pull-out resource room instruction, competition between public and private schools, and the need to improve service quality. (Contains 15 references.) (DB)

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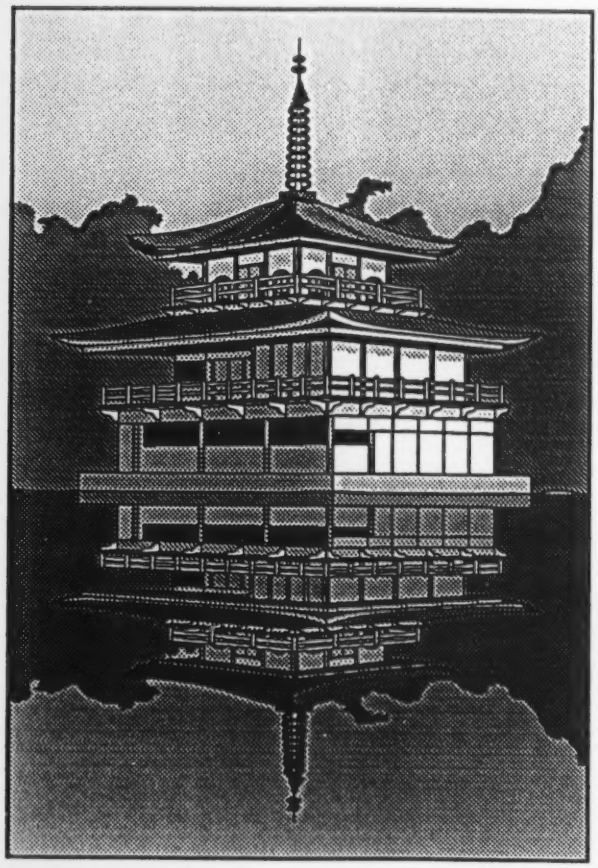
Japanese Special Education Today: Issues and Implications



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Shigeru Narita, Ph.D.
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November, 1992

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Historical Background

As in most countries, special education in Japan is best understood in its historical and cultural context. Abiding cultural values strongly affect much of contemporary Japanese special education. The nation's long historical and cultural background is not always widely known in Western Europe and North America.

Chinese civilization was particularly influential in the formation of Japan's education and culture. Chinese philosophical and literary ideas have remained strong throughout Japanese history. The Confucian heritage emphasized respectful and benevolent hierarchical relationships, harmonious social relations, and morality. In fact, Chinese ideas and systems were modified to suit Japanese circumstances and ideas. They were interwoven with Japanese philosophical and literary traditions.

Not all of Japanese special education is homegrown. Since premodern times, Japan has been unusual in its long record of interest and initiative in learning from other countries. In the Meiji period (1868-1912), nation's new leaders realized from the nature of Western society that education had a major role to play in nation building and modernization. The Meiji government initiated a public education system that would help Japan catch up to the West. Germany particularly was found to be a model more congenial to Japan's educational guidance and goals. Japan codified a nationalist education philosophy in 1890 in the Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyoiku Chokugo). The Rescript was the basis for Japan's ideology until 1945.

After the war, the government was placed under the control of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, and nationwide efforts began to reconstruct the country. A wave of foreign ideas, mainly American, was introduced and adopted through the educational mission committee of the Allied Forces.

The Allied Forces in 1946 requested the US Department of Army to send a delegation of education experts to Japan in order to establish a democratic system. The Educational Mission headed by George D. Stoddard, Secretary of Education of New York State, conducted on-site visits and studies and investigated the actual situation of education in Japan. The report made by the Mission was entitled "Report of the US Education Mission to Japan", addressed the principle of reform on Japan's education and was fully acknowledged by the Allied Forces.

The Mission's report regarding special education stated that "attention should be given, at the appropriate levels, to physically handicapped and mentally retarded children. Separate classes or schools should be provided for the blind and deaf and for other seriously handicapped children whose needs can not be met adequately in the regular schools. Attendance should be governed by the regular compulsory attendance law." The statement of this report formed an important basis for the later enactments of provisions of the segregated system of special education.

The foreign ideas incorporated the following: the establishment of a 9-year compulsory education system; the restoration of local school boards; revision of the curriculum and textbooks, including the abolition of "ethical code" education; the establishment of coeducation; introduction of university-based teacher education; and support for equal access of all children to higher education. The system of special education was reorganized under these circumstances which constituted a radical reform of Japanese education. Educational services to children with various categories of handicaps were resumed on a small scale.

Centralization and Teacher's Autonomy

There was an attempt to transform the centralized prewar system into a decentralized system based on an American model with elected local school boards. After the restoration of full national sovereignty in 1952, Japan immediately began to modify some of the education changes introduced by the military administration of the Allied Forces. These modifications reflected Japanese ideas about education and the function of a Japanese educational system. A "moral education course" was reinstituted in modified form, despite substantial initial concern that it would lead to a reintroduction of prewar nationalism in the schools. School boards reverted to being appointed, rather than elected, and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (The Monbusho) regained a great deal of authority.

Nowadays, Japanese schools operate in a centralized, nationally controlled school system, and teachers throughout Japan must plan their instructional activities within the structure and guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Education. However, the highly centralized Japanese education system actually requires

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more planning, curriculum development, instructional decision making, and professional choices at the local level and engenders more diversity at the classroom level than does the apparently less controlled system in other developed countries. Japanese teachers, in fact, have significant professional latitude that still meet the centrally defined instructional guidelines. In practice, Japanese teachers are actually less controlled in matters of instruction than most of the developed countries' counterparts.

Compulsory Education

The School Education Law was enacted in 1947. By 1956, the Special Measures Law for General Provision of Public Schools for the Handicapped (Law No. 152) went into effect. This law increased governmental subsidies to promote the establishment of schools for the handicapped. The compulsory education system of schools for the blind, deaf and handicapped was established in principle, but not enforced on April 1, 1947. The enforcement of compulsory system was delayed due to the following reasons: such types of special schools were new to Japan; and, the general public was forced to implement the 6-3 compulsory education system for regular elementary and lower secondary schools during the difficult period following the end of World War II. Therefore, the enforcement was deferred for more than a quarter century.

On November 1973, a Government Order was issued to determine the enforcement date of that part of the School Education Law which provided for establishing schools for the handicapped. Under the provision of the Order, handicapped children who had been deprived of the right to receive compulsory education services were given opportunities to attend school and guaranteed a free public education. Finally, a compulsory system of 9 years of education in schools for the handicapped was firmly established in the academic year 1979.

The degree of handicaps of children eligible for special schools is defined in the Order for Enforcement of the School Education Law (Article 22-2). The detailed stipulations of the Article are given in the Notification of "Educational Placement of Pupils and Students Who Need Special Educational Treatment"(Notification of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, No. 309, 6th of October 1976). The Notification also denotes the degrees of handicaps of children eligible for special classes. Chart 1 shows educational placement of handicapped children provided under this Order and Notification. In general, education for severely handicapped children is provided in special schools, while education for mildly handicapped children is provided in special classes or ordinary classes with special consideration and arrangements.

A definition of special education depends on the category of handicap of a child, and not a child's individual educational needs.

Children Served

For the 1990 school year, enrollment of handicapped and non-handicapped children in elementary and lower secondary schools--part of the 9-year compulsory schooling entitlement--was approximately 14.8 million. From this total, 93,497 and 77,162 children and youth were served in special schools and special classes in the regular schools, respectively. Of these, the number of children counted as part of the compulsory education population was 131,846, denoting approximately 1 percent of the students in that category. Figure 1 demonstrates long term trends of population in Japanese special education and children in the regular school who have individual educational needs. The maximum enrollment of the handicapped children to the special educational system in the compulsory education was 1.2% of all school aged children in 1973; however, enrollment declined gradually. In 1987 the enrollment dropped to .93%. Nonetheless, it was estimated that 3.69% of all school age children had special educational needs in 1972 (Ochiai, 1990).

This small number is quite a surprise to educational personnel in many developed countries. In the United States, for example, 4,687,620 children and youth with disabilities from birth through age 21 were served under the public laws. This means that approximately 6.9% of the nation's resident population of children and youths were served.

One fact which may explain the small number of SEN children can be correlated to the well being of infants and toddlers and to the low mortality rate of new born babies. The mortality rate of new borns is 6.2 over 1,000, the smallest rate in the developed countries. These statistics draw our attention; however, there is

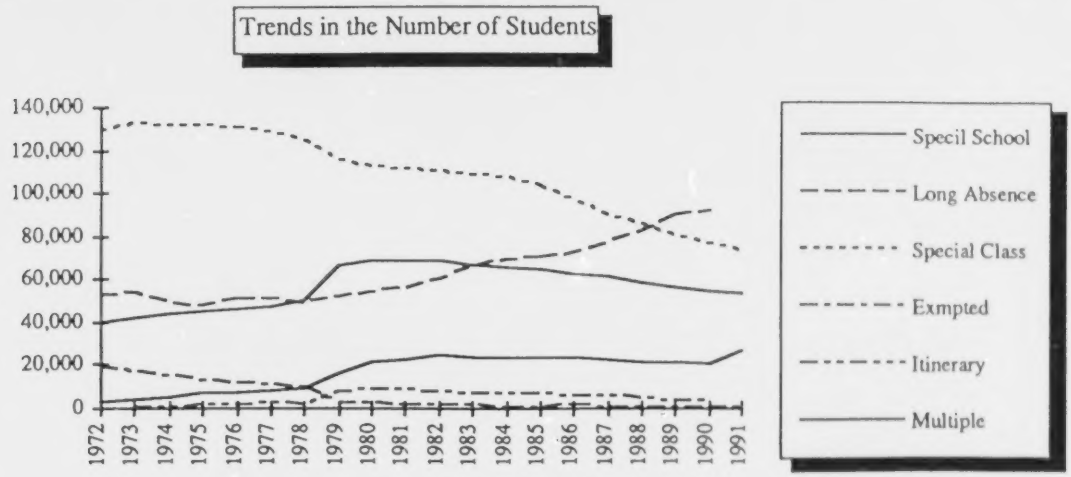

Figure 1 Trends in the Number of Students

the other side of the coin in these figures. The Eugenic Protection Act enacted in 1948 permitted abortion and eugenic operation under specific provisions. The Eugenic Protection Amendments Act of 1952 followed. One provision of the Amendment states that abortion is legal in such cases where a pregnant woman would encounter financial difficulties in rearing the child. Though statistics are rather outdated, the 1979 statistics show that over one million pregnancies were terminated. The majority of women chose to consult gynecologists and undergo an abortion, rather than bear impaired infants when their fetuses were diagnosed as "something wrong," or when they were at risk. In this context, we can assume that the number of newborns with serious birth defects would be smaller than in other industrialized countries.

Another fact regarding the relatively small number of children with special educational needs in Japan and related to the presence of remedial instruction at JUKU is that the number in this population is not counted in any official statistics or reports. This issue will be discussed later.

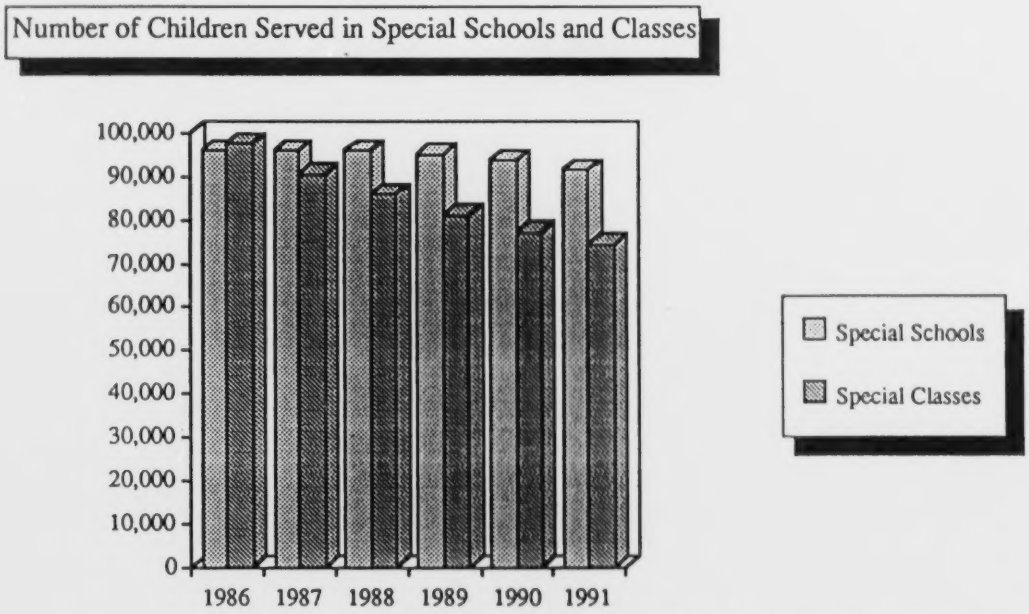

Figure 2 Number of Children Served in Special Schools and Classes

For five years, the number of handicapped children and youth in special classes reported under the School Education Law has decreased significantly across all handicapping conditions. As for children and youth served in special schools, the number has decreased slightly in five years.

Compulsory education for the handicapped in the academic year of 1979 resulted in a drastic decrease in the number of children who were postponed or exempted from schooling. The number of these children plunged from 9,872 in 1978 to 3,384 in 1979.

regardless of achievement may create a greater range of abilities within Japanese classrooms than is likely to occur in the developed countries where retention is common and skipping grades is not unheard of. Japanese teachers tend to believe that all students can learn from the diversity within the group.

Teachers also believe that the whole-group lesson, when done well, can benefit every child and teach important lessons about social interaction and problem solving, as well as about subject matters. However, whole-group directed instruction in the

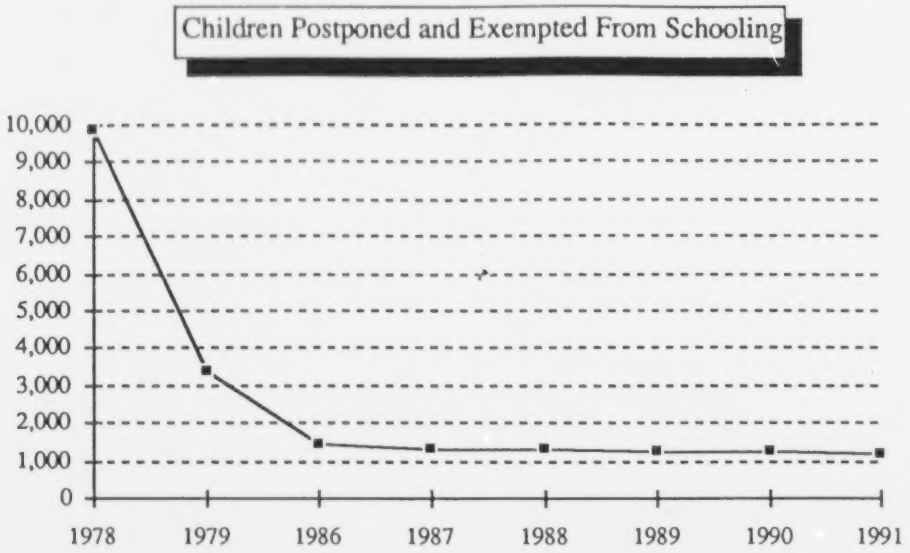

Figure 3 Children Postponed and Exempted from Schooling

Classroom Management

Seemingly, Japanese teachers spend much less time on direct discipline and classroom management issues than do American teachers. Instead, their time is spent guiding interpersonal relations and arranging the instructional patterns of mixed-ability grouping in the belief that peer supervision, peer teaching, and group learning can be more effective for all students.

This conception of classroom processes and of the teacher's role is one strategy for dealing with diversity in classrooms. At the school level, diversity is also dealt with on an individual basis in terms of personality, academic interests, and accomplishments. For instance, moving whole classes along together

classroom does not meet the needs of individual students. In fact, the number of students who have fallen behind is increasing and is one of the societal issues.

"The Fallen Behind"

The demanding curriculum is difficult for students with learning problems. Three aspects of education policy compound this problem: the view that effort alone can compensate for differences in ability; little provision for diagnosis of learning disabilities and individualized remedial assistance; and automatic promotion, which increases the pressure on students who have fallen behind as they face an increasing burden of academic

demands. Inevitably, the number increases with grade level, accompanied by attendant disaffection with school. The Monbusho's recent survey reveals that .14% of elementary students were identified as school phobia/truancy for 30 days or more of attendant disaffection from school. In the lower secondary schools, 1.04% of students fell into the same category. That is, 5 students in a typical upper secondary school do not show up in school for more than 30 days a school year.

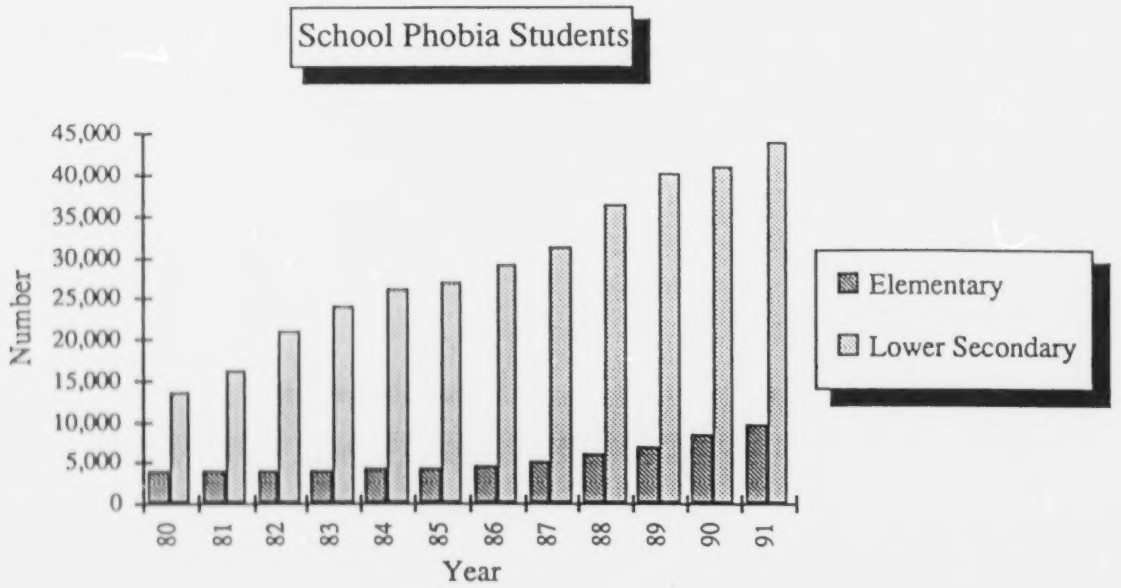

Figure 4 School Phobia Students

In addition, 42% of elementary students of attendant disaffection with schools more than 50 days a year failed to resume for schooling; 62% of lower secondary students failed to show up to school in the following school year.

School bullying

While disaffection with schools appears to be growing in the face of the rigidities of the present school system, the unwillingness of alienated students including handicapped students and returnees from abroad to participate in formal education and to observe group norm is considered as a rejection of large social system. School bullying represents group behavior gone out of control. It is a disturbing problem for the public that values order and harmony. Though school bullying is reported on a small scale, it reflects anxiety on the part of parents, school personnel, and general public about opening the system to greater diversity and individualism.

Curriculum and Instruction

Overall, Japanese education provides all children with balanced basic instruction in the 3-R's, science, music, and art throughout the nine years of compulsory schooling. However, the basic goals both for regular and special education encompass a greater range of competencies, including social, aesthetic, and interpersonal skills. First of all, skill in human relations is considered essential to social life. Schools and teachers consequently place a great emphasis on developing children's interpersonal skills and promoting a sense of social cohesion and collective responsibility through a wealth of nonacademic and academic learning actives. Second, Japanese generally view academic knowledge as merely one part of the more comprehensive goal of developing 'ningen' or the 'whole person.' It is assumed that the broad educational goals set for children cannot be accomplished if there is a separation of heart and body. On the basis of the 'whole person' educational premise, the teachers' routine responsibilities pertain to aesthetic,

physical, moral, and social development of the children.

Experience with a wealth of nonacademic learning activities, such as cultural ceremonies at each grade level, is considered essential to this process as well as to full comprehension of academic subject matter. Thus, it is assumed that broader and "difficult to measure" educational goals are set for students in school, such as "to be friendly each other, to foster a sense of healthy body and mind, to work in harmonious way," and so on. It is rare to see school mottoes, such as "to be able to read and write the kanji of the grade level. "

Special education is essentially segregation. Special education services are provided in special schools and special classes in regular elementary and lower secondary schools. There are three types of special schools: schools for the blind, schools for the deaf, and schools for the mentally retarded, physically handicapped, and health impaired.

common between children with SEN and non-SEN children. These programs involve field trips, open house events, club activities, and so on. Such programs are intended to give SEN children opportunities to learn and play with children who will someday be their friends, coworkers, and neighbors. Both groups benefit from being together on a regular basis during the years when their attitudes and perceptions of themselves and others are most pliable. As a result, the peer interaction will facilitate the self-esteem of children regardless of the presence of handicaps. However, the mainstreaming issue is still in limbo.

Parent's Motivation in Education and Parent-Financed Institution

To a great extent, Japanese are eager to learn. This ethos of

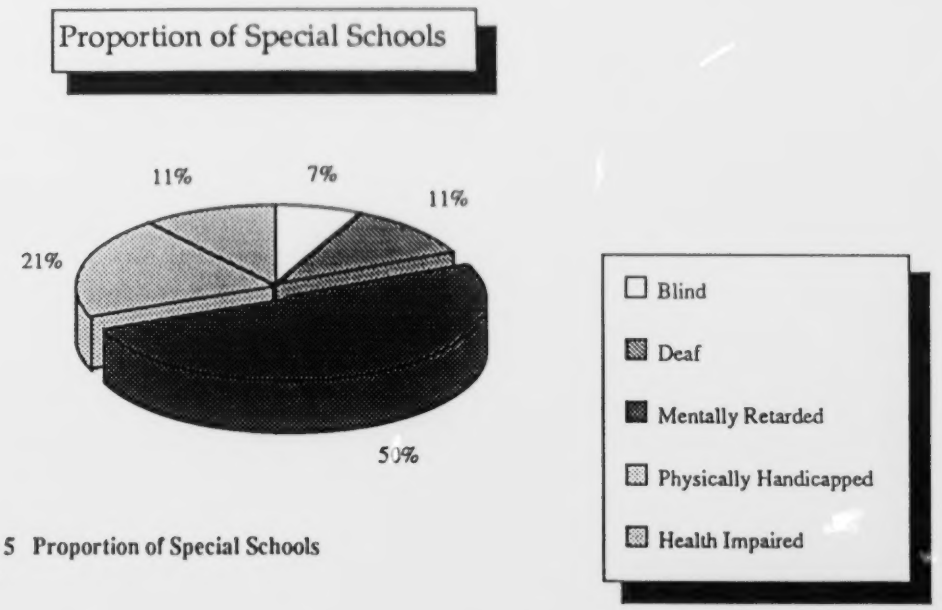

Figure 5 Proportion of Special Schools

There are a number of children with special educational needs (SEN) who, for a variety of reasons, may do better at first in a nonintegrated environment or a home-based program. Others may benefit from flexible approaches and may spend part of the week in special programs and in limited inclusion programs with non-SEN peers. Transactional programs are becoming

pursuing new understanding and relevant knowledge leads to a strong commitment to personal education and self-improvement which extends beyond the official school system to a variety of institutions, programs, and opportunities.

Of special significance for school age children are the JUKU--

the unofficial parent-financed schools which supplement the official system. They seem to meet important educational needs for many families. JUKU is the Japanese term for a large and diverse group of private, profitmaking, tutorial, enrichment or remedial, preparatory, and cram schools found throughout the country. Most JUKU operate after school hours and on weekends. JUKU parallel the official school system in a somewhat interdependent relationship. These JUKU are a response to several realities in Japanese education.

The juku can be classified into academic and nonacademic. The latter offer instruction for general enrichment purposes in a wide variety of subjects such as abacus, piano, calligraphy, and so on.

Juku attendance has risen at all grade levels. The juku enterprise today is a recent phenomenon, paralleling the expansion and development of secondary and higher education. The growth during the past two decades has been dramatic. A national survey conduced in 1990 by the Monbusho shows a great hike in the tuition by 20% over 1989. In 1990 the average family with one child for academic and nonacademic instruction paid $1,629 in the preschooling, $1,664 in elementary schooling, $2,087 in lower secondary schooling, and $2,630 in the upper secondary schooling, respectively. As students advance through the higher elementary grades and into lower secondary school, there is a tendency for more students to enroll in preparatory and examination programs. Parents shoulder the burden.

Academic juku offer instruction in school subjects such as math, language art, science, English and social studies. Many juku provide both kinds of services as well as remedial assistance for those having difficulties with their schooling. Home tutors tend to be considerably more expensive, and the number of families employing them is only a fraction of those sending their children to juku. Combing costs of juku and home tutor, for students of elementary and lower and secondary school age, the fees rose 21% from the 1989 year. For upper secondary students, the fees rose 25% from 1989.

However, the fees for nonacademic instruction tend to decline. The average family with one elementary child paid 624 US$, with lower secondary student, 207 US$, and with upper secondary students, 151 US$, respectively.

Japanese parents are concerned about doing whatever they can for their children's education. If the rising enrollments in juku are any indication, cost is not yet a limiting factor for most parents. Juku clearly are given some priority in family budgeting. Juku fees depend on the grade level of the student, number of courses taken, and the amount of individual instruction involved.

Hundreds of thousands of students with SEN, as well as non-SEN students, are studying at JUKU in order to catch up or to brush up. Although it is observed that the JUKU are not a healthy phenomenon from a governmental and societal viewpoint, they seem to have been meeting important educational needs for many students and their families. JUKU meet: 1) the need for supplementary instruction to enable many elementary and secondary students to keep pace with a demanding school curricula, and 2) the need for remedial instruction to help those who have fallen behind to catch up.

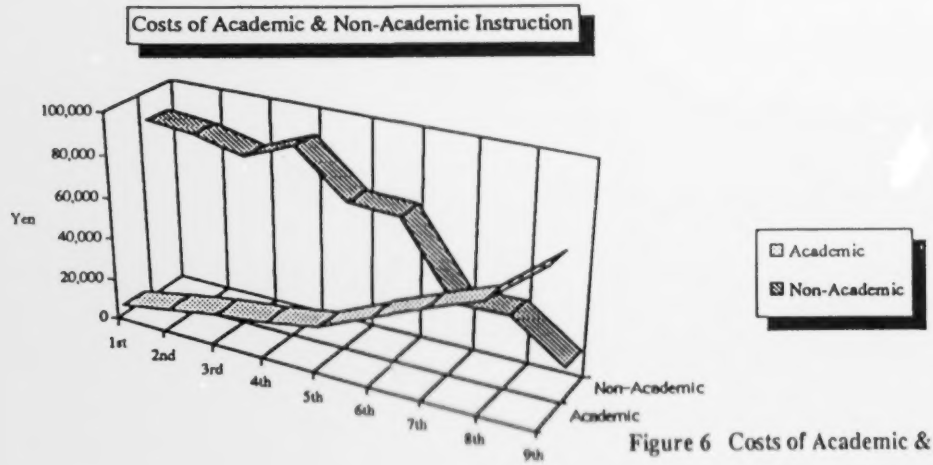

Figure 6 Costs of Academic & Non-Academic Instruction

Hard to Read Children

Japanese children, spending one-fourth of their time in elementary school mastering their own language, have to learn three separate writing systems: Chinese characters and two Japanese phonetic symbols. This is a complex task. During the first year of elementary schooling, children learn to read and write the two 48-character phonetic systems and 80 Chinese characters. It is not until the end of the 9-year compulsory period that children have mastered the approximately 2,000 characters necessary to basic literacy, enough to read books and newspapers.

The number of at-risk children who demonstrate difficulty with reading has been reckoned at 5--6 percent in a preliminary study of elementary schools. Professor Yamada of Hiroshima University has recently revealed that approximately six percent of sample population in the elementary schools showed difficulties in reading units of Chinese characters and two phonetic systems and in simple orderly calculation(Yamada, 1992). This finding is contrary to the common understanding among the general public that children with reading problems number less than one percent.

Upper Secondary Schooling

By the end of 9th grade, all students who desire to continue their schooling have been successfully matched with an upper secondary level school. Approximately 94 % of all Japanese children advance to full-time enrollment in one or another kind of upper-secondary school. About 2% enter some type of part-time education program. Approximately 3% take a full-time job.

Transition and Employment

Upper-secondary education beyond 9 years is not mandatory. However, all prefectural governments run separate schools for the upper-secondary handicapped population. Approximately, 70% of the graduates of 9 years compulsory schools for the handicapped proceed to upper-secondary schooling. In the case of graduates from special classes in regular lower-secondary schools, about 50% go to upper- secondary schools.

There are no standardized criteria for a certificate or diploma of completion upon graduation in the Japanese special education system. Therefore, the problem of dropping out--leaving school before high school graduation-- is not common to the handicapped. To address this issue, we should recall: 1) non-existence of minimum competency measures, and 2) the existence of remedial instruction provided in private educational sectors.

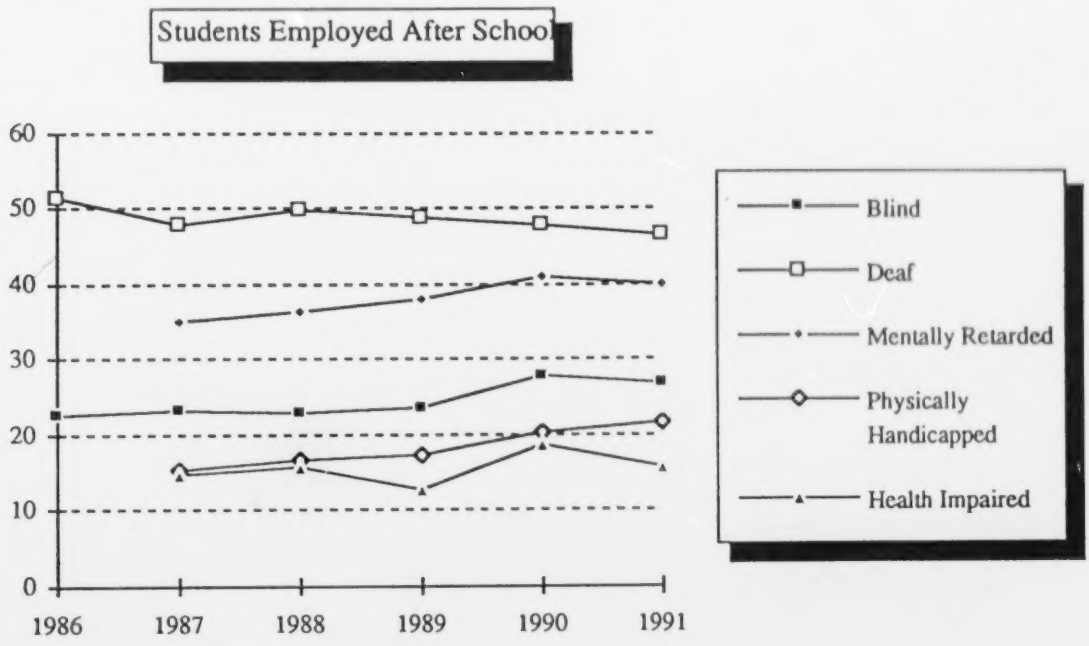

Figure 7 Students Employed After School

Vocational education is viewed as an expansion of the work/study in regular curricula in special schools. The work/study program is fairly narrow in its goals, generally given in upper secondary departments of special schools, largely focused on serving students with mild and moderate handicaps, typically implemented in programs reserved for students with disabilities. The vocational education programs aim to improve a whole range of social adaptation skills as well as work skills so students can lead independent lives after schooling.

The employment rate of the upper secondary students has increased in the last 5 years, either in part-time or full-time basis. The graduates of schools for the deaf are comparatively well employed, though their employment rate has decreased in the same period. Overall, 30% of the graduates were reported to have obtained employment in the 1991 school year.

Employment of graduates from schools for the mentally retarded appears to be comparatively lower than for persons otherwise handicapped. Twenty eight percents of graduates with mental retardation were employed either full-time or part-time base in the 1991 school year in the Prefecture of Kanagawa, which is adjacent to the Tokyo Metropolitan area. Even supported employment is getting tougher every year due to the recession in the business community.

Social Status of Teachers

Within the framework of the controlled school system, numerous conceptions of teachers and their roles exist. One point of contention is the degree to which Japanese teachers are civil servants, obligated to follow the scripted guidelines and mandates imposed by the national government. Another point of contention is the degree to which teachers are professionals with latitude to exercise their wisdom and professional judgement. Despite the central policy mandates and within an overall structure and curriculum dictated on a national level, Japanese teachers in fact have significant professional latitude to devise activities and create materials that meet the centrally defined instructional guidelines (Sato & MaLaughlin, 1992).

Education is assigned high value by the Japanese, who deem it a top priority. Many Japanese consider people to be their most important resource, because Japan has few natural resources and scarce agricultural lands. The position of schools in Japanese society and the esteem accorded teachers reflect the high value assigned to education by the Japanese.

There is a greater degree of mutual obligation and responsibility between teachers, parents, and students within Japanese schools and between schools and other institutions in society. The Japanese assume that everyone must share in the effort to educate the young. When problems occur, everyone is expected to accept responsibility, although schools and teachers bear the main responsibility for education.

Professional norms and arrangements require Japanese teachers to allocate more time to their jobs. Because schools run Monday through Saturday (except the second Saturday of the month,) Japanese teachers work many more days than do their counterparts in the developed countries.

The structure of Japanese teachers' workdays accommodates a broader conception of their role: Japanese teachers do not teach all day, as do American teachers, and spend many more hours at school each day than do American teachers, but they typically have fewer teaching hours. Only about 60% of their school time is spent in classroom activities; the remainder of the day is spent carrying out extracurricular responsibilities and fulfilling other duties to the school.

Teacher Education

Teachers in special schools are legally required to have a special education teacher certificate. However, teachers in special classes are not required. The Law for Teacher Certification of 1954 has given legal ground for teachers with only regular teacher certificate to be appointed as teachers for special schools. In fact, quite a few teachers in special schools have been appointed without being licensed.

Teachers are basically the only professional staff in the school. There is no specific provision for employing other disciplines such as speech therapist, physical therapist, school psychologist, gui ance counselor, and so on.

1) Initial Training

Education is assigned supreme value by most Japanese, who

deem it a top priority. Therefore, Japanese teachers are an essential element in the success of individual growth, and the eventual prosperity of the society. Japanese society entrusts major responsibilities to teachers and expects much from them. It not only confers high social status and economic rewards, but also subjects teachers to constant public scrutiny. Japanese culture views the school as a moral community and a basic training ground for becoming a good citizen. Teachers have broad responsibilities for providing moral education and character development and for instilling fundamental values and attitudes. In this context, teachers are expected to infuse cultural values throughout all phases of schooling. Teachers are responsible for students' lives both inside and outside the school buildings.

Minimum requirements for student teaching in teacher preparation courses are 4 weeks (4 credits) for the elementary program and 2 weeks (2 credits) for the secondary program. A prospective teacher meets the formal academic requirements through successful completion of prescribed courses of study in a post-secondary institution. However, no matter how good one's academic record may have been, graduation from a university does not guarantee appointment to a teaching position. Most public school teachers are prefectural employees. A license awarded by any prefecture is valid in all prefectures. The applicant must take prefectural appointment examinations which help ensure that all applicants compete on equal terms for any teaching vacancies.

Once applicants gain entry to the teaching profession, they are assured lifetime employment. They are promoted on the basis of seniority, as are all public sector employees. The idea of performance-based merit pay is not a viable consideration mostly because of the seniority system. As a result, all prefectures and municipal boards of education are careful in recruiting new teachers.

2) Inservice Training

Continuing education on the job reflects Japan's cultural commitment to self-improvement as well as a response to perceived weaknesses in formal teacher preparation. Prefectural and local boards of education are not wholly satisfied with university teacher preparation. The Ministry of Education requires first-year teachers to receive a minimum of 20 days of inservice training during that year. Much of the 20 days of inservice training required of new teachers takes place in the schools where they teach and is carried out under the supervision of teaching supervisors.

Under the direction of The Ministry of Education and prefectural and municipal boards of education, inservice training is offered for public school teachers at all levels and at various career stages. Under the direction of the Monbusho and prefectural and municipal boards of education, inservice training is offered for public school teachers at all levels and at various career stages. It takes five forms:

Inschool training;

Informal inservice training carried out by teachers themselves in district-wide study groups;

Training given at the local education center;

Training given to principals, vice principals,and curriculum consultants by the Monbusho at national training centers; and,

Two-year training given to a few hundred nationally selected teachers annually at three nationally funded institutions established since 1978 for the purpose of providing graduate professional education for experienced teachers.

One of the commendable characteristics of the teaching profession in Japan is the extent to which inservice education is teacher initiated and directed. Teacher organizations also sponsor training and research related activities.

3) Voluntary Professional Growth

Japanese teachers generally have a strong commitment to their profession. They try to maximize their own professional growth and that of their peers. Thus, teachers systematically engage in a wide variety of activities aimed at enriching their professional expertise. Teachers participate in formal research groups. Other teachers form voluntary study groups in which members review and critically evaluate one another's curriculum activities and ideas. These groups meet outside of school time and take up such diverse topics as painting techniques, choir directing, poetry, voice projection, teaching gymnastics, and social studies concepts. In addition to these outside activities, teachers

regularly hold professional development activities in the school with the dual goal of enhancing individual competence and fostering group identity.

4) Licensed Teacher

The statistics issued from the Ministry of Education show that approximately one-third of those teaching special classes in regular elementary and lower secondary schools are licensed as special education teachers.

Teachers Union

The Japan Teachers Union (JTU) is the dominant organization of educators, and the most influential group in educational and political matters. The JTU is a national federation of prefectural unions, each of which has considerable autonomy. JTU's members are predominantly teachers in the public elementary and secondary schools. The membership has been continuously declining, and in 1985, the number dropped below 50% of all public school teachers. The JTU has been at odds with the Monbusho on most matters during virtually the entire period. The government has often been characterized as "conservative" and the union as "liberal." However, neither label is appropriate in the cross-cultural context. Though the JTU is well to the left on the Japanese political spectrum, its educational stance sometimes coincides with the Monbusho's direction. Both JTU and Monbusho have similar perspectives on such issues as segregation of students with handicaps, and teacher promotion and transfer.

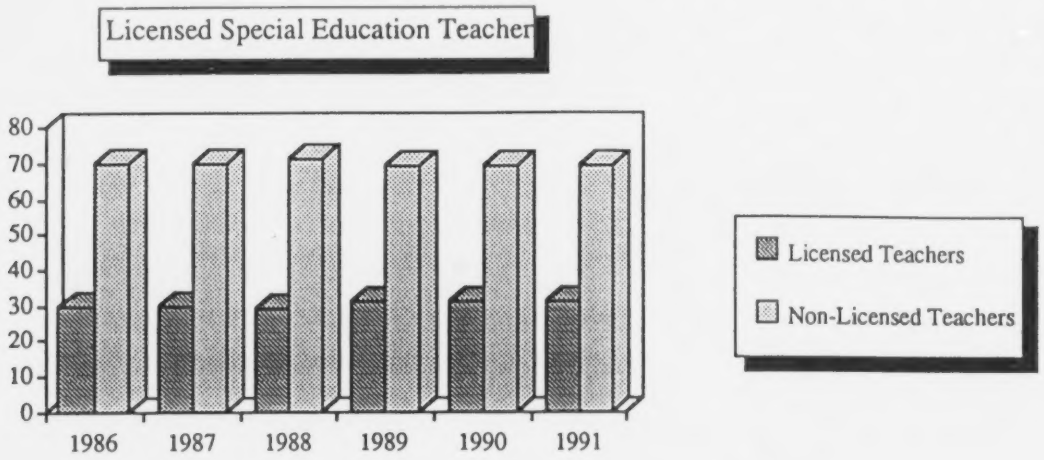

Figure 8 Licensed Special Education Teacher

5) "Student Bashing"

A number of special education teachers have been reported to practice physical abuse, such as corporal punishment in the instruction. Those teachers tend to have graduated from private colleges which mainly provide physical education and dance without appropriate professional training as a special education teachers. In fact, those graduates are well disciplined, because they were corporally trained through sport and group activities, just like soldiers. Interestingly, local school boards are willing to hire those who graduated from these colleges. Corporally oriented instruction and punishment has been reported from the schools for the mentally retarded. One teacher reported that, "Corporal reinforcement works better than verbal reprimands for them. "

Teacher Salaries

The salary structure for public school teachers is established by the Japanese National Personnel Authority. While legally ap-

plicable only to national schools, in practice this structure provides the model on which salary structures of public schools throughout the country are based.

The base salary of a Japanese teacher depends heavily on seniority. Salary is not substantially affected by degree and certificate level. There is no differential between salaries of teachers with a master's degree and those with a bachelor's degree.

Special education teachers have been given a special allowance hike of 8% as an incentive. Central, prefecutual, and municipal governments share the financial arrangements for that measure.

Female teachers are among the very few women in Japan who are given the right to take one-year leave of absence after childbirth. However, they are not paid during the leave.

Financing Special Education

The cost of public education is shared by national, prefectural and municipal government and, augmented at upper-secondary and higher education levels by tuition from parents. The Ministry of Education provides almost half of the total public expenditure on education. The Ministry of Education funds the more than 600 national education institutions at all educational levels. It also provides subsidies for educational purposes to private institutions, prefectures, and municipalities. The national government also makes local allocation tax grants to prefectures and municipalities in order to reduce financial inequalities among them.

The annual expenditure for special schools in 1988 was about 493 billion yen provided through the national government, prefectures, and municipalities. Expenditures have increased approximately 150 times in 32 years, since the Special Measures Law for Construction of Public Schools for the Handicapped was enacted.

Cost per student in special schools in 1988 was 5.4 million yen, while cost per student in regular elementary schools and lower secondary schools was about 590,000 yen and 600,000 yen, respectively. That is, the per student cost in special schools is 9.3 times and 9.0 times the cost of a student in regular education.

The cost for special schools in 1988 was approximately 493 billion yen funded through the national government, prefectures and municipalities. Compared to the expenditure for special schools in 1970 which was approximately 42 million yen, special education school expenditures have increased by a factor of 12 in 18 years.

Because the number of special schools is limited, many children are forced to live in school dormitories or travel long distance to attend school. They are isolated from their peers and families. The financial burdens on parents become greater than on parents of children in regular education. In order to reduce such burdens, subsidies are offered to parents. These subsidies cover part of the following costs depending on the parents' income level: school lunches, room and board, field trips, and instructional supplies.

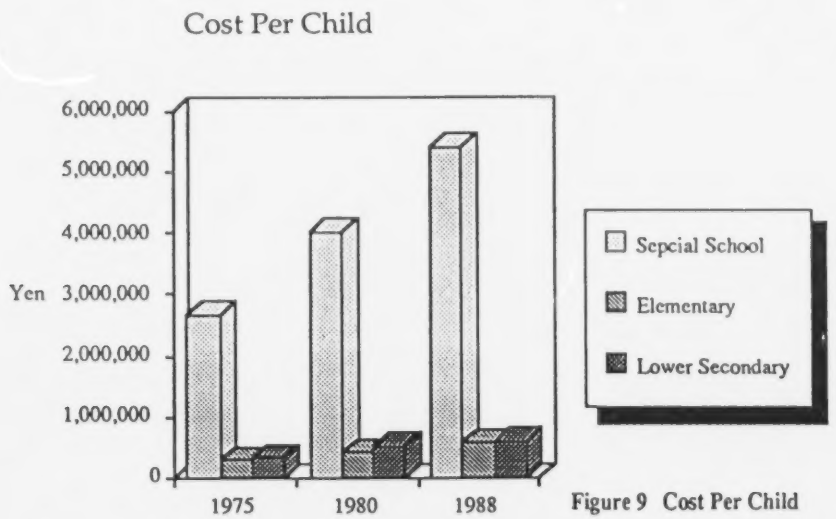

Figure 9 Cost Per Child

Educational Computing in Schools

Some studies reveal that the availability of computers in the nation's schools has increased rapidly in the five years from 1985-1990. As of February 1990, the proportional distribution of special schools using computers is as follows: 94% of schools for the blind, 98% of schools for the deaf, 63% of schools for the mentally retarded, 90% of schools for the physically handicapped, and 74% of schools for the health impaired.

One problem is determining the actual level of computer use. Indications are that the significant use of computers is very low. In many special schools, computers sit idle, and instruction via computers is limited. While few teachers view computer technology as detrimental to learning, many claim to be unfamiliar with computer technology applied to teaching and, as a result, they are not strongly motivated to use them. To make matters worse, teachers do not have clearcut goals to use them. With computers in special schools, teachers spend a great deal of time on repetitive manual labor. That is time away from students.

One issue is that most special schools lack of teacher training and funding for purchasing educational software and peripherals that are required for students' easy access to computers. Every year a number of computers are dumped into schools; computers tend to sit in the faculty room or business office, but not in the classroom. Purchasing computers in special schools is always a one shot deal. School administrators do not realize that it is never going to be cheap to buy technology, because they have to buy peripherals, software, maintenance, training, and upgrading.

Another issue is that since Japanese schools place much emphasis on pure knowledge, curricula that develop creative ability are relatively rare. Rote learning through CAI courseware is therefore typical of Japanese education (Cassagne & Iiyoshi, 1992).

Furthermore, a nationwide software information network has not yet been established. A broad range of resources available for applied and adaptive technology has not been systematically evaluated. Consequently, information regarding successful applications and programs is not fully disseminated.

Training is critical. If teachers do not receive appropriate training, computers will continue to be used as electronic baby-sitters. In many training sessions in Japanese schools, instruction and hand-on experience computers is continuing, despite the fact that it has to be training in math and history. Those who are in charge of teacher training for educational computing do not know that training on computers or technology alone is not ineffective. These educators should ignore calls for technology equity and start exploring ways to achieve equity using technology.

Issues for the Future and Concluding Observations

In recent years, Japan has made considerable progress in national and prefectural policy actions, financial arrangements, facilities and equipment, and defining a national course of study. With 13 years of implementation of a compulsory system of special education, early child-find and intervention, remedial services for slow learners, job training services and access to adult life skill training, finding qualified teachers for special schools, and parental involvement in various educational dimensions, are natural outcomes.

Concerns over educational services for students with learning difficulties have been voiced. The Ministry of Education has launched a pilot project to find better ways for serving these students. Nine schools have been chosen for experimental programs in the project. A new educational service called "tsukyu," a type of pull-out resource room instruction, will be launched soon for students with learning difficulties. Still the education system today is suffering from a disease whose symptoms are entrance exam-score competition, school disaffection and drop-out, violence in the schools, and so on. A question arises, "Can the tsukyu service for students with learning problem be medicine targeted the symptoms? Does it have effect or little effect?"

Free public education is facing numerous problems such as remaining competitive with private schools and the JUKU in the academic area. The general public has found education in the private schools to be affordable and reliable. Parent advocacy groups are organizing private and unlicensed schools in which students with special learning problem learn whose educational needs are not met in the public schools.

The societal demands for qualified labor forces in the marketplace will result in increased responsibilities for special educa-

tion personnel in all aspects of providing better services to meet the needs of children and parents. In other words, we need a shift in focus in special education policy from 'access to services' to 'quality of services' in promoting comprehensive special education. This quality of educational services will be brought by such provisions as decentralization of control, school initiatives, flexibility in teaching, use of technology in instruction, and individualization of instruction.

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